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South Baghdad neighborhoods get water, sewer upgrade

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Contractors in Doura are installing nearly 41 miles of new water mains that will connect hundreds of homes to a more dependable network of fresh, potable water. The mains range in size from 4 inches to 12 inches, replacing a dilapidated worn out system prone to numerous leaks. The improved water pressure will benefit the entire community. (*USACE photo by Norris Jones*).

BAGHDAD, Iraq— Crews are busy installing new water mains in three small neighborhoods in south Baghdad and another contractor is just about finished repairing a major sewer collapse there.

"The Iraqis like seeing people working in their community," said Maj. Robert Nash with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "That particular area in Doura has been neglected for decades and residents appreciate our efforts."

Nash is optimistic about the neighborhood's future despite ongoing insurgent clashes. "People are starting to get a grasp of what's really going on and what we're trying to do," Nash said. "There are more shops open, more people walking around, more kids playing in the street

than I've seen in a long time. We're working shoulder to shoulder with Baghdad's government to make this happen."

Once the essential service improvements are completed including new roads there, Nash believes the neighborhoods will look completely different and be much nicer. "We're hopeful people will once again take pride in their neighborhoods and keep things cleaned up," he said. "Best case scenario is that the people themselves will push the bad guys away. That's happened in other parts of Iraq and I'm confident it will happen here. It just takes time."

Each of the three mahallas (neighborhoods) is getting about 22,000 meters of new water mains installed, ranging in size from 100 millimeters to 300 millimeters (4 to 12 inch pipe). "We're putting in a total of about 41 miles of water mains in those three areas," Nash continued.

Regarding the collapsed sewer main in Mahalla 824, the contractor is replacing 280 meters with new 900 millimeter pipe (35.4 inches in diameter). "We're just about finished with that project," Nash said, "and it's definitely making a dramatic improvement eliminating a huge pond of standing sewage that has been there a long, long time."

Echoing Nash's comments is Maj. Chip Daniels, Operations Officer with 2nd Brigade Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division.



The repair of a sewer collapse has almost been completed - with 280 meters of new 900 millimeter (35.5 inch) sewer pipe in Mahalla 824 in south Baghdad. The project has eliminated a large pond of sewage providing families a much healthier, cleaner environment to raise their children. (*USACE photo by Norris Jones*)

"Residents are seeing that we and their government are committed to bettering their community and this definitely has a direct positive impact on the security situation. Iraqis there, when they wake up in the morning, want clean water in their homes, a functioning sewer system, the ability to send their kids to school, be able to go to work, and have a life as a family," said Daniels. "We're doing everything we can to give them that opportunity. There are a few bad people out there who are

trying to hold up progress in this country, but all in all, the average Iraqi wants to move forward and they want to get beyond this.

"Improving the essential services lets residents see that things are getting better. A vast majority of Iraqis want a future for their country and this is a step in that direction," Daniels concluded.

Iraqi contractors are currently involved in more than 100 water and sewer projects throughout Baghdad Province. Nash recognized the maneuver units he works with from the 2nd Brigade 1st Cavalry Division and the 9th Engineer Battalion for their continued help in getting engineers out to projects so his staff can identify any problems and take corrective action. "We could not do our job without their help," Nash said.



A toddler accepts a colorful pencil from a soldier with the 2nd Brigade's Special Troops Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division, during a recent trip to Doura to check essential service project improvements there. (*USACE photo by Norris Jones*)

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